

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An apparatus and method for providing controlled acoustic isolation within various forms of headsets. The invention provides manual and automatic mechanisms for changing the amount of acoustic isolation provided by the headsets. Sounds in the environment that the user wishes to be made aware of can be programmed into a set of stored sound selection characteristics. In response to correlation of the stored sound characteristics with sounds in the external environment the headset decreases acoustic isolation by coupling signals from one or more external microphones to the audio conversion elements within the earpieces. Alternatively, the apparatus can respond to sounds to be blocked by increasing acoustic isolation. A manual control may be activated by the user to decrease acoustic isolation at their discretion.